



U.S. Department of Justice

Ronald C. Machen Jr.
*United States Attorney for the
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center
555 Fourth St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530*

PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:

Public Affairs

(202) 514-6933

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Leader, Enforcer, and Eight Other Members of Area Drug Ring Charged in Superseding Indictment With Racketeering and Narcotics Charges - Three Defendants Charged With Murders in the District and Maryland -

WASHINGTON - A federal grand jury in the District of Columbia returned a superseding indictment today charging ten individuals with narcotics and firearms offenses, federal racketeering conspiracy, and three murders in aid of racketeering activity, in connection with an ongoing investigation into a violent drug organization that operated in Barry Farm and other neighborhoods within the District of Columbia and the larger metropolitan area. The charges were announced today by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Shawn Henry, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), Salvatore R. Lauro, Chief of the U.S. Park Police (USPP), and Roberto L. Hylton, Chief of the Prince George's County Police Department.

The defendants initially were charged in a six-count federal indictment on March 10, 2010, with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute phencyclidine (PCP), heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine, within the District of Columbia and Maryland, and related drug charges. The original indictment covered criminal activities from August 2009 through March 2010.

The superseding indictment returned today stems from a continuing investigation of the defendants' drug organization and several acts of violence attributable to them. It covers crimes dating to 2006 and broadens the case to include newly filed racketeering and murder charges.

As set forth in the superseding indictment, the drug organization began operating as early as 2006 with defendant Mark Pray at the helm. The superseding indictment alleges that Mark Pray, 29, enlisted family members, friends, and individuals known to him from Barry Farm and elsewhere to distribute controlled substances. The indictment alleges that members of the Pray Drug Organization regularly carried firearms to promote and protect the drug enterprise and its interests; that members of the enterprise committed, attempted, and threatened to commit acts of violence, including murder and robbery, to protect and expand the enterprise's criminal operations; and that members of the enterprise promoted a climate of fear through violence and threats of violence.

The superseding indictment specifically charges Mark Pray and two co-defendants, Alonzo Marlow, 30, and Kenneth Benbow, 30, for their respective roles in three separate murders committed in aid of the charged racketeering activity, in the District of Columbia and Maryland, between 2008 and 2010. One killing was of a government witness, Crystal Washington, 44, who was shot to death April 10, 2009 in the District of Columbia. She was slain one business day before the start of a D.C. Superior Court trial at which Washington was to testify for the government against Mark Pray and three other individuals.

The indictment charges Mark Pray and defendant Alonzo Marlow, who functioned as an “enforcer” for the Pray Drug Organization, with Washington’s death. Pray and Marlow also are charged with the January 13, 2010, murder of Jheryl Hodge 20, in the District of Columbia. According to the indictment, Marlow shot Hodge several times, in broad daylight, in the middle of the Barry Farm neighborhood. Pray and defendant Kenneth Benbow are charged with the murder of Van Johnson Jr., 28, which took place September 24, 2008, in Prince George’s County.

In addition to Pray, Marlow and Benbow, the defendants include: Randolph Danson, 25, Robert McMillan, 25, Timothy Moon, 23, Robert Smith, 31, Charles Wade, 25, Herman Williams, 19, and Larry Williams, 29.

All of the named defendants will be arraigned on the superseding indictment in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on a date to be determined by the Court. All of the defendants face sentences from ten years to life in prison if convicted.

The federal Murder in Aid of Racketeering charges against Mark Pray, Alonzo Marlow, and Kenneth Benbow are punishable by life imprisonment or the death penalty.

“Over the last year, we have been very focused on improving public safety in the Barry Farm community, not only through our continuing law enforcement efforts but also through creative community outreach initiatives,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “This investigation targeted an organization that caused a great deal of harm, not only in the Barry Farm community but throughout the Washington area. I would like to thank the hard-working men and women of the FBI, Metropolitan Police Department, U.S. Park Police and Prince George’s County Police Department, as well as our prosecutors, for the work they put into this case and their efforts at making our communities safer.”

“These new charges reflect how a complex criminal enterprise can tear apart a community,” said Assistant FBI Director Henry. “Our multijurisdictional and intelligence- driven investigative efforts demonstrate how we can succeed against this threat.”

“MPD and our partners have been continuing to focus on violent crime,” said Police Chief Cathy L. Lanier. “This drug organization represents the worst type - in that they had the audacity to target an innocent witness in our city. We have sent a message today that this will not be tolerated.”

This prosecution grew out of a long-term FBI/MPD/USPP alliance called the Safe Streets Task Force that targets violent drug trafficking gangs in the District of Columbia. The Safe Streets Initiative is funded

in part by the Baltimore Washington High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area as well as the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. The Safe Streets Initiative involves more than 150 Safe Streets Task Forces around the country that combat street gangs by combining federal, state and local police resources. The task forces, which began in 1992 in Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, address gang activity including drug-related crimes. Sharing resources, manpower and intelligence allows federal prosecutors to focus on securing the maximum sentences and penalties for gang members found guilty. By working through a task force, investigators can focus on the entire criminal enterprise, instead of prosecution of individual gang members.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

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